

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County's

Farm Flash



Look At What Else Our
Dairy 4-Hers Are Doing!



**Oneida County 4-Hers take TOP HONORS at the NYS
Junior Holstein Convention:**

1st Place—Junior Dairy Bowl Team A (undefeated—30 teams)

★Ryan Smith ★Meghan Vaill ★Jasmine Wratten
★Wayne Wratten, Jr.

4th Place—Junior Dairy Bowl Team B (out of 30 teams)

★Mitchell Whitman ★Kristen Gallagher ★Jaycie Staring
★Zachary Wratten ★Sean Baldwin

3rd Place—Senior Dairy Bowl Team (out of 12 teams)

★Heather Frost ★Mark Worden ★Eric Worden
★Brianna Baldwin ★Layna Hurley ★Rob Gallagher

1st Place—Int. Dairy Jeopardy Contest

★Meghan Vaill

1st Place—Int. Prepared Speech Contest

★Rayne Paddock

2nd Place—Junior Speech Division

★Zachary Wratten

*1st Place
finishers are
eligible to go to
the National
Holstein
Convention in
California!*

Other participation:

Jasmine & Wayne Wratten—Extemporaneous Speech Contest

Jasmine Wratten, Steven Smith, Kristen Gallagher—Prepared Speech

Jasmine, Wayne & Zachary Wratten and Kristen Gallagher—

Distinguished Junior Member Finalists

Layna Hurley—Scrapbook and Folding Display



February 2009



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CCE of Oneida County Farm Flash
Table of Contents

Page 7 Farming With Family
 Page 8-9 Ag Secretary Lays Out Priorities
 Page 10 Are Your Farm Business Management Skills Ready
 for the 21st Century?
 Page 11 Agriculture Tax Tips
 Page 13 Agricultural Safety Certification Program
 Page 14 Veterinary College Develops Vaccine for Johne's
 Disease
 Page 15 Looking for Youth to Participate in Farm Safety Review
 Page 16 Back to Basics
 Page 18 Farm Service Agency
 Page 19-23 Crop Shorts

February Events

Please join us for this **unique opportunity to voice your opinions** before NY renewable fuels incentives and policy recommendations are in place. Learn about and provide feedback on the planned NY Renewable Fuels Roadmap project and provide critical input (*gathered by survey at the workshop*) on issues important to New Yorkers. The New York Renewable Fuels Roadmap project (funded by NYSERDA, NY Ag & Markets and NYS DEC) seeks to address these and other questions for New Yorkers:

- How much biomass do we have?
- What is the best use of this resource for New Yorkers?
(Heat, Electricity, Liquid transportation fuels, food/feed)
- Will New Yorkers be consumers of renewable fuels, or producers as well?

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR THIS FREE WORKSHOP.

(Lunch provided.) Attendance may qualify for planning board training credit

Meeting size is limited. VOICE YOUR OPINIONS: If you are not able to attend but would like to fill in a survey, please contact CCE office for a survey form.

FEBRUARY 6, 2009 (Friday) 10 am at Cornell Cooperative Extension Oneida County 121 Second Street, Oriskany, NY 13424 RSVP

New York State Farm Show

February 26-28 at NYS Fairgrounds Syracuse. **Need tickets?** Stop into the CCE office for your NYS Farm Show tickets.

HOME ENERGY WORKSHOP

Feb. 28 8:30am-11:30am; Oneida County CCE in Oriskany. Speakers at this forum will highlight home energy dynamics with specifics on energy use, conservation and efficiency including air sealing and insulating a home, causes for ice dams, stack effect, history of home construction and low cost ways to fix the problems.

Energy production topics will include Solar PV, Solar Thermal, and Small Wind. Information on tax and financial incentives will be discussed. Pre-registration recommended. Call Cindy at (315)736-3394 ext. 124

Chopper workshop: Feb. 24th, 10am- 1pm, Clinton Tractor in Clinton.

A New Holland Rep will show participants proper chopper set-up, maintenance and repair and Bob will discuss efficient chopper operation. Lunch provided by Clinton Tractor. To register call Michele at 853-6151.

February Events

Progressive Small Dairy Discussion Group
Feb. 17th, 11 am – 2 pm
Lunch will be provided – no charge
Oneida County CCE Office in Oriskany

This is the start-up meeting of a new discussion group for operators of smaller dairies who are interested in meeting regularly in a structured discussion group setting with other farmers and service providers to learn and share ideas.

At this first meeting we will be joined by Kathy Barrett from Cornell as well as some local service providers, and we will: establish the goals of the group; select topics of interest and identify potential speakers; and agree on frequency, time and location of meetings.

Pre-registration recommended; contact Jim Manning, 736-3394 x129.

“We’ve got to do something!”

Winter Dairy Management 2009—Dairy Modernization

February 12th—Going from tie-stall to freestall & low cost parlor.

Verona Firehall, Verona, NY—10:00 am to 3:00 pm

- Business Planning for a Successful Project
- Planning Your First Freestall – Optimal Comfort Housing/Manure System Strategies
- Remodeling a Tie-Barn for a Parlor – Many Design Options to Fit Needs & Budget
- Evaluating Environmental Issues on your Farm

February 13th—Renovating or Replacing Older Free-stall Setup

Madison County Extension Office, Morrisville, NY—10:00 am to 3:00 pm

- Business Planning for a Successful Project
- Renovating the Old Freestall for Milking Cows Heifers or Special Needs
- Dare to Dream – Replacement Parlor Options (including Robots & Rotaries and Manure Handling Innovations
- Evaluating Environmental Issues on your Farm

March Events

2009 NY Ag Literacy Week

March 16–20,

New York Agriculture in the Classroom is pleased to announce the fourth annual NY Ag Literacy Week in support of its mission of fostering awareness, understanding, and appreciation of agriculture and the food and fiber system. During National Ag Week—March 16th to 20th—volunteers throughout the state will go into second grade classrooms to read a book with an agricultural theme and talk to students about agriculture. Books will be donated to the school.

THE BOOK: *The Empire State Investigator— The Applesauce Bandit*

NYAITC is excited to announce that for 2009 Ag Literacy week, we will be writing and publishing our very first children's book. This will be the first in a series of ALW books titled *The Empire State Investigator* which will highlight NYS Agriculture. The topic for ALW 2009 is the NYS Apple Industry and the book title is ***The Empire State Investigator: The Applesauce Bandit.***

If you would like to volunteer to read to a classroom(s) or if you would like to sponsor a book, please contact Heather at the 4-H office—736-3394x122 or email hes7@cornell.edu.

Hoof Care Hands-On Workshop

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Hosted by Collins Knoll Farm, Chadwicks

Hoof care concepts presented will include cattle hoof anatomy, hoof growth and wear, manageable causes of common hoof disorders and basic treatment strategies for each disorder. Participants will learn to identify early-stage lameness and the art of picking out lame cows in a group. With instruction and guidance from a professional hoof trimmer, participants will learn how to properly use hoof trimming tools and treatment materials as they work on cadaver cattle feet and practice treating common disorders.

Crop Congress: Mar 18th, 10:00am- 3pm, VFW on Franklin St in Clinton, Zone tillage, Weed control in corn and soybeans, Sprayer set-up, maintenance and calibration, crop records and cost of production. Lunch provided by Clinton Tractor. NYSDEC credits available. To pre-register call Michele at 853-6151.

T&P Sales Crop meeting: Mar 3rd, Verona Fire Hall. NYS DEC credits, \$10/person, Contact Dawn at 829-8000 to pre-register.

Combine Workshop: Mar 10th, 11-2pm, Whites farm Supply in Sangerfield. A company rep will demonstrate combine set-up for small grains, maintenance and repair. NYS DEC credits available. To preregister call Julie Crawford at 697-2214.

March Events



14th Annual *Maple Weekend*

On March 21-22 & 28-29 from 10am - 4pm each day, about 110 of the finest maple producers throughout New York State, from Buffalo to Albany, Rochester to Binghamton and Jamestown to Plattsburgh, will open

their sugarhouses to demonstrate the making of maple products "from the tree to your table." Four producers from Oneida County and one from Madison County will be opening their sugarhouses for this event. They are Dave's Sugarhouse-Oneida, Link Maple Farm-Taberg, Riverdale Farms-Camden, Tibbitts Maple Products-New Hartford, V.V.S. FFA Maple-Verona. **The event is free to the public.**

On *Maple Weekend*, visitors can see all aspects of maple making, from the tapping of the trees to get the sap, to the boiling of the sap into syrup. Some producers will also demonstrate the making of maple syrup into other products including maple cream, maple cotton candy and maple sugar. Most sugarhouses will allow people to sample the products.

Techniques of maple production vary from producer to producer. Some are state-of-the-art and some use traditional methods, so everyone is encouraged to visit several of the participating farms. In addition, many of the producers will have a variety of additional activities including horse and wagon rides, snowshoeing, guided walks in the woods, kids' corners and pancake breakfasts.

For more information contact Remi Link 315-736-3394 ext. 111, www.mapleweekend.com, or www.cce.cornell.edu.



Farming with Family

"Agricultural economists have argued that farms are or should be operated exclusively as businesses in which performance is evaluated by profit returned." One woman recently said, "If our operation was like a business, we could fire one or two of our family members, but we can't!" A 15-year Cornell study of how 33 farm families make decisions concludes that while "farms are indeed operated as businesses ... because production is closely related to the life cycle of the family, the farm, in organization and management, is remarkable, if not unique, among businesses in developed economies"

As the age of farm operator's increase, transferring ownership and management of the farm to the next generation will become one of the most important issues farm families will face. Farm families who anticipate a transfer of the farm to the next generation should plan early for the transfer and maintain open communication throughout the process. Extension educators can work with family members to help them identify areas of contention. Educators can help develop communication skills, problem solving, and decision making skills.

Farm transfer to the next generation can be accomplished by a "Farm Transition Plan". The goal of the transition plan is make sure the business has the resources to continue for many generations. The transition plan helps families analyze it's current situation, look to future trends, and then develop a plan of action.

No two transition plans are alike. The complexity of individual farm businesses and personalities and characteristics of family members will make each transition plan unique. A transition plan is a process in which the entire family should have a role. Plus, a business must be profitable in order to continue operation to the next generation. One way to determine the profitability of a farm is to conduct what is called a SWOT analysis. This analysis will highlight the Strengths Weakness, Opportunities and Threats of a farm operation.

After completion of a SWOT analysis it is recommended that a comprehensive business plan be developed. This plan will allow families to develop strategies for marketing, financial, risk and personnel management sector of the business.

The planning should include transfer of assets as wells as management control. The transferring of assets and the tax implications should be done with consultation from an attorney and a tax practitioner. Management transfer is often more difficult to accomplish, but with communication and a plan for sharing responsibilities the transfer of skills should be treated as a process.

The planning should also include a strategy to meet the retirement needs of each generation. It should be as such that if a family member is retiring it will not have an adverse affect on the farm operation.

Ag Secretary Lays Out Priorities

By [Janie Gabbett](#) on 1/27/2009, Meatingplace.com

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said he wants to modernize the food safety system, including focusing meat inspection on pathogen prevention and containment.

"A modernized system would have as a goal prevention, early detection if it can't be prevented, and mitigation of any adverse impacts if something occurs," Vilsack told journalists on a conference call.

Addressing calls from some consumer groups and legislators for a single food safety agency that would combine USDA and FDA, Vilsack was quoted as saying, "I think before there can be any conversation about merging of entities or a single agency or anything of that sort, you've got to get the foundation right."

In a news release, USDA outlined some of Vilsack's priorities:

- Advancing renewable energy sources while also making sure the biofuels industry has the support to survive recent market challenges
- Making progress on major environmental challenges, including climate change while helping farmers participate in markets that reward them for sequestering carbon and limiting greenhouse gas emissions
- Providing a safety net for farmer and ranchers (including independent producers and local and organic agriculture) that includes enforcing the Packers and Stockyards Act
- Modernizing the food safety system
- Quickly implementing the 2008 farm bill
- Combating childhood obesity and enhancing health and nutrition
- Investing in programs that alleviate hunger and suffering overseas and support long-term agriculture development.
- Restoring the mission of the Forest Service as a protector of clean air, clean water, and wildlife habitat and a key player in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration
- Modernizing USDA's computer systems and cleaning up USDA's civil rights record.


Campaign to Save Farmers' Lives Enters Third Year: Rebate effort surpasses 500 tractors

Tractor overturns are the primary cause of these fatal and permanently crippling injuries. In the event of a rollover, the use of ROPS and a seatbelt reduces the risk of injury by 99 percent. Tractors built after 1985 have built-in rollover protection, but most tractors in use today are older than that.

The New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) announces that it has fitted the 565th tractor with a rollover protection system (ROPS) through its rebate program, now entering its third year. The average out-of-pocket cost to farmers is just \$380 compared in many cases to nearly \$1,000 before the ROPS program.

Farmers should call toll free **1-877-ROPS-R4U (or 1-877-767-7748)** for more information. By calling the "ROPS-R4U" hotline, farmers can both receive information on the program and allow hotline staff to do the legwork for them. In addition to saving farmers money, the ROPS program is specifically designed to reduce the hassle of retrofitting a farm tractor with an approved roll-bar and seatbelt. The rebate amounts to 70 percent of the cost of purchasing and installing rollover protection on a tractor, a savings of up to \$765.

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Are Your Farm Business Management Skills Ready for the 21st Century?

Leadership (#7 in a series)

Leadership skills have to do with influencing, motivating, and directing other people. From a managerial perspective, leadership channels individuals' behavior in a direction that will accomplish organizational objectives. These individuals may be managers in the business, employees of the business, or consultants. Individuals with strong leadership skills have a vision of what the business will become and are able to communicate this vision to others in a way that motivates them to work towards its accomplishment.

Leadership attitudes important to CEOs of American corporations include being the inspirational evangelist for a vision, managing strategy implementation, and building relationships with subordinates. While there are a large number of differences between leading a large corporation and leading a farm business, the first two leadership attitudes are critical to the leadership of any business. Unlike a corporate CEO, the farm business manager may not have subordinates. As a result, this leadership attitude does not appear to have a direct application to the farm business. However, if landlords, input suppliers, market advisors, and other business associates were substituted for subordinates, relationship building becomes an important leadership attitude for the farm business manager.



Indicators of Strong Leadership Skills:

- Providing a clear sense of direction for the business.
- Continuing to learn about management.
- Serving as an officer of volunteer organizations.
- Helping motivate others to improve their skills.
- Continually looking for new ideas that will improve the business and the people associated with the business.
- Striving to build strong relationships with employees and business associates.
- Monitoring progress of strategy implementation.

Agriculture Tax Tips

By Bonnie Collins

By this time all W2'S, 1099's, and required Payroll reports should have been filed with the appropriate taxing authority.

Important dates for February 2009: The following returns are normally due on February 28th and this date falls on a Saturday which makes the returns due **March 2, 2009**

*File the following forms for 2008 as applicable- 1098, 1099 and/or W2-G for certain payments made during 2008.

*File Form W-3 with Copy A of all Forms W-2 you issued in 2008.

*Farmers and Fisherman: File Form 1040 and pay any tax due

Choosing a Tax Professional

If you need assistance with your taxes and decide to hire a professional tax preparer- chose someone with experience preparing tax returns for farm businesses. When selecting a tax professional, ask a few questions to see if they offer what you are looking for:

Experience: Does the tax professional have experience in working with similar size and type businesses? Are they familiar with your particular line of business?

Services: Does the tax professional offer payroll services or electronic filing of tax returns. Electronic filing is not required, but is safe and the most efficient way to file your return.

Price: What does the tax professional charge for services? If the IRS examines your return, what is their policy for assisting you?

References: Ask for a list of clients you can contact.

Receipts and Records

So what is the best way to keep records? Simple: use any recordkeeping system that clearly and accurately reflects your income and expenses. Yes tax records must support all the income, tax deductions and credits listed on your tax return. However, keeping records should be more than for the preparation of a tax return. A recordkeeping system that is fundamentally easy to use and provides the capability necessarily to manage your information is the right system for you.

For example, knowing the cost of feed for each milk check is valuable information. When you receive the monthly milk check, it is a good idea to compare dairy feed costs to milk sales. A good ratio of feed cost to milk sales would be under 50 percent. One record system to consider is QuickBooks. Join us on Friday, February 6, 2009 at Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, 11am-2pm, to learn the basics of QuickBooks Pro. Learn how to set up and use QuickBooks to keep financial books. We will show you how to use this information for planning purposes. The workshop is free, including lunch. Plus, if you have an interest in purchasing QuickBooks Pro '09, at a discounted price please call to reserve your copy. Call Bonnie at 736-3394 x 104.

To Advertise in the up and coming issues of Farm Flash, please call Cindy at 315/736/3394 x.124 for all the information you will need.



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\$20 non-
4-H
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The US Department of Labor's Hazardous Occupations Order for Agriculture (HOOA) dictates that youth 14 and 15 years of age who wish to work as a hired employee for someone other than a parent or legal guardian, and operate a farm tractor that is 20hp or greater, must successfully pass a tractor safety training program. Additionally, to operate any powered equipment or machinery attached to the tractor, the youth must successfully pass a machinery safety training program. Through the National Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Program (NSTMOP), these two required training programs have been combined into one curriculum.

The training involves 24 hours of classroom and hands-on instruction, followed by a written test and a tractor driving test. The curriculum is also appropriate for all youth whom are age 12 or older and operate a tractor and equipment on family farms. **However, to be able to take the driving test, youth must be 14 years old by the day of the test.** Youth ages 12 and 13 can participate in the educational portion of the program, but cannot practice driving tractors or receive a certificate.

In addition to tractor & implement safety, other discussion will include:

- *General farmstead safety
- *Lawn Mowers
- *Skidsteers
- *ATV's

For more information, contact or Heather (x122) at the 4-H Office. **To register contact Jenn Collins at the Herkimer County 4-H Office, 866-7920 or jlrc34@cornell.edu**

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Veterinary College Develops Vaccine for Johne's Disease

by Stephanie Specchio

Scientists at Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine have developed a vaccine that prevents Johne's disease, a condition that leads to \$220 million to \$250 million in losses annually to the U.S. dairy industry. The breakthrough will be published in the January 2009 issue of the journal *Vaccine*.

Johne's disease (pronounced yo-knees) is a contagious, chronic and usually fatal bacterial infection that mainly infects the small intestine of such ruminants as cattle, sheep and goats as well as farm raised deer, elk, llamas, alpaca, bison and zoological wildlife.

Until now, the only way to prevent the disease was to identify and cull infected animals and then prevent the spread of the disease with management changes. The Cornell team identified and prepared the antigen necessary for the vaccine development. Their antigen is licensed to the Biotechnology Research and Development Corp.

"Johne's disease is one of the most important infectious diseases that threatens farmers," said Yung-Fu Chang, Cornell professor of microbiology and the paper's lead author. "Equally important, though, this organism has been suspected to be one of several possible contributing agents to Crohn's disease that has similar pathologic lesions in people. The results of our research may offer useful information to those working with Crohn's disease."

Johne's disease is caused by the *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis*, a hardy bacterium known to survive for up to a year in the outside environment, and related to the agents of leprosy and tuberculosis. Found worldwide, the bacterium causes a thickening of the intestinal wall that blocks the normal absorption of food. Infected animals eat normally but cannot absorb any nutrients, which results in wasting and death. Infected animals shed the bacteria in their manure and spread the disease. Other animals get infected through contaminated feed or water. Newborns and young animals can catch the disease through contaminated teats or directly from an infected mother's colostrum or milk. Unborn calves are also at risk of infection while in the uterus of an infected cow. The disease is very hard to control; farmers may keep their barn areas spotless only to have their animals contract the disease in contaminated pastures, Chang said.

The research was funded by grants from the Biotechnology Research and Development Corp., and a contract through a cooperative agreement between the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Looking for Youth who live or work on farms to participate in Farm Safety CD Review

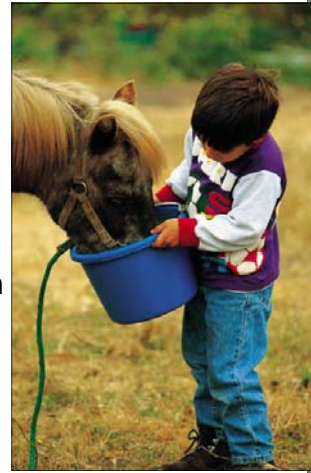
We are looking for 4-Hers in grades 3 through 6 who live or work on a farm to participate in reviewing a farm safety CD. The purpose of the review is to assess the effectiveness of the farm safety CD in instructing youth regarding safety on and around the farm.

Date:
Thursday,
February
19th
(During school
break)

Time:
Schedule
your time:
8:00 am to
5:00 pm

Place:
Cooperative
Extension
Office

Youth will take a short pre-quiz, then review the interactive CD on computer, and then take a short post-quiz. Topics on the CD include Tractor Safety, Chemical Handling, ATV Safety, Grain Handling, and Animal Handling. Plan on 1 1/2 to 2 hours for completion. Time slots are available from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.



Please contact Heather at the 4-H office by February 6th for more information or to sign up.

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BACK TO BASICS

Improve Cow Hygiene

Improved cow hygiene will have a significant impact in herds dealing with environmental mastitis, says Jeff Reneau, professor and dairy management specialist at the University of Minnesota.

Basic management practices — clipping or flaming udders, providing freshly bedded, clean, dry and comfortable stalls, frequent alley scraping, and moving cows quietly and slowly — will help improve cow hygiene. And, improved cow hygiene will reduce teat exposure to mastitis pathogens, thus reducing environmental mastitis and somatic cell counts.

Keep Calves Comfortable in Cold Weather

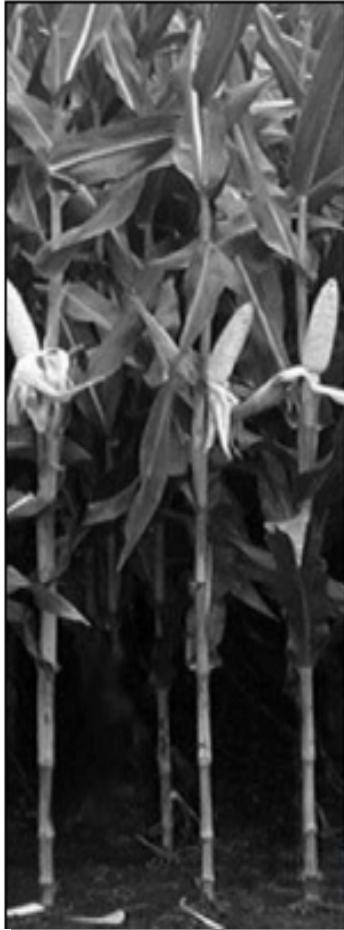
According to university of Minnesota extension ag engineer Kevin Janni, the following signs mean your replacement calves and heifers should be able to comfortably handle the upcoming cold weather:

- No cold air drafts on the animals.
- A clean place to lie down.
- Plenty of clean, dry bedding.
- Plenty of fresh air.
- Minimum frost or condensation during cold weather.



FARM WANTED: Couple looking for 100 – 300 acre dairy farm that has room for vegetable production and/or small greenhouse. Barns to hold 75-100 cows and 50-75 heifers. Contact Keith at 1-410-482-8661

Pastures for Rent: Town of Verona. 30 acres with 4 rotating pastures. High tensile fence, barn access for shade and weather protection. Water and grain included. May through November. If interested, please call Ken Brewer at 829-4983 (home) or 935-7735 (cell) or email kbrewer286@poisinello.com



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From the Desk of Donna W. Perdy,
County Executive Director – Farm Service Agency

Initial sign up for the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program ended January 21, 2009. The extended sign up began on January 22, 2009 and will give producers who missed the initial sign up an opportunity to participate. The difference in the two sign up periods is the start date in which producers can choose to begin receiving payments. As of January 22, 2009, start months will begin as of the month the contract is signed or further in the future, if chosen.

There are a couple of changes to this new MILC program that will affect payments. \$16.94 is still the baseline price; however, a Feed Cost Adjustment will be built in to the target price. If the National Average Dairy Feed Ration Cost for a month during the MILC period is greater than \$7.35 per hundredweight, the baseline price of \$16.94 will be increased by 45% of the increased feed cost. The National Average Dairy Feed Ration Cost is based on corn, soybeans and alfalfa. This will kick in a payment sooner if feed costs rise and/or milk prices drop.



In addition, it is important that you review your production records from your milk handler. The name you use to receive your milk check must match our eligibility records. If you are using an assumed name for your monthly milk check and nothing has been formally filed with the State of New York, it will not be accepted for MILC purposes and can hold up payments. Please review your records and make any necessary changes.

DCP sign up is underway and we will be sending out appointment cards shortly. While you are at the office we will need to complete all new payment eligibility paperwork.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact your local Farm Service Agency - Phone: (315) 736-3316, Ext. 2. Our office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Crop Shorts

By Jeff Miller

Hold off on purchase of fertilizer: That is the word we hear from local fertilizer suppliers. Since September fertilizer prices have been falling:



In September, Fertecore reported that wholesale prices of anhydrous ammonia at the Gulf of Mexico were over \$800 per ton. In early January, anhydrous ammonia prices were below \$200 per ton. Similarly, diammonium phosphate (DAP) at the Gulf was over \$1,000 per ton in September and about \$350 per ton in early January. It looks like N and P prices will be lower than last year. Potash price at least at the present remains high. You should

consider checking in with your fertilizer supplier to check on prices and talk about quantities of fertilizer you plan to buy this spring. Local suppliers have to lock in what they need to buy, to supply you during the coming season. Soil testing will continue to be an important task to identify economic rates of nutrients to apply to your crops.

No-till crop production: I used to hear the comment "No-till no CORN!!!!" . Why did farmers make that comment about no-till. Twenty years ago NRCS, then the Soil Conservation Service, lent a no-till planter to area farmers to give them a chance to try the system out. Most local farmers that tried it had lower yields. Farmers were trying to go cold turkey from one system to the other and that just didn't work.

When you till up a field you temporarily, artificially improve soil-air-water relationships because you fluff up the soil. Unfortunately in the process of plowing you destroy the structure of pores that was in place in the soil. So if you don't continue to fluff up the soil to create that temporary period of improved soil-air-water relationships....what do you have? A soil that has settled and has very little pores to allow for air and water movement....a structureless soil. This is why no-till fails when it immediately follows conventional tillage. The seed is placed into this structureless soil and is expected to be able to absorb water and be able to breathe and develop roots and push a small stem with leaves up through this tight soil. These plants start off behind and never really compete with neighboring fields that were plowed.

It takes time for the soil to rebuild its structure after plowing (maybe 3-5 years) to be able to support the same yields that occur under that temporary environment created by plowing. The beauty of no-till is that once you get there the yields are more stable and sustainable from year to year without all the field preparation. I know what your thinking..... you cant wait 3-5 years for that to happen. Hold on. Do you have a corn/hay rotation? How long is your hay in the field? Three to 5 years. So yes you can burn down your sod in the fall and no-till in the spring and have very good yields. If you grow continuous corn you can shorten the process

by incorporating cover crops into your current system. You can also use zone building / strip tillage to shorten the time frame to get to no-till.

So why do local farmers have a renewed interest in no-till? Lets start with the economics. Studies done in Pennsylvania and other places show that a no-till system is more profitable than other kinds of tillage systems. The major difference is with a no-till system, you do a burn down spray to prepare for planting; while with a tillage system, you do your tillage to prepare for planting. All other costs are similar. So, the cost differences are fuel, additional equipment, maintenance of that equipment and the time spent to do the tillage operations versus one extra spray, the fuel and the time it takes. Yet yields are statistically the same in trials. You may refer to Conservation Tillage Series #6 produced by the College of Agricultural Sciences and Penn State Cooperative Extension for more in depth reading or view it online at <http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/publications/freepubs/FreePubs/pdfs/uc130.pdf>

What are some of the other benefits of no-till? The first is less soil erosion. The crop residue that covers the soil surface intercepts the rainfall before it hits the soil preventing it from dislodging the soil and starting the process of soil erosion. We all know that our topsoil is the richest layer of our soil profile and its loss reduces our crop yield potential.

The second benefit takes a little more time to achieve. As the soil develops structure (without disturbance from tillage) air and water can move more freely through the soil meeting the needs of growing crop plants, increasing the rate of water that can infiltrate into the soil in stead of running off the surface. A third benefit also takes some time to occur. This is an increase in organic matter that occurs as crop residue breaks down without being lost in the process of oxidation caused by annual tillage. Added organic matter increases the soils ability to store more nutrients and moisture for crop production.

A fourth benefit from no-till is increased flexibility in cropping activities. As soil structure forms, you will find you can access fields sooner after a rain. Fields will be firm but not hard, and they will not rut as easily. Local producers have commented that they could get into fields more quickly with combines after no-till vs conventionally tilled fields. However, take precautions. Even no-till fields can rut and compaction can occur without making ruts.

Where does no-till work best? No-till works best in southern climates in well drained soils. Why? Because the practice of no-till conserves soil moisture loss which is beneficial in climates with water deficits. Many yield studies show yield increases from no-till vs conventional till in these dry southern climates in the US. We saw this effect in 2007 when we put out a demonstration with 4 tillage practices including conventional, chisel till, a sunflower single pass and zone-tillage in a field in Munnsville. With the exception of the zone till all other practices tilled the entire soil surface. The zone builder only disturbed 1/3 of the soil surface in the strip where the seed was placed. This was a dry year and the tillage practice with the least surface soil disturbance had the best yield. So no we may not see a yield increase in response to no-till but we can expect similar yields when compared to conventional tilled production with less work and less expense.

Look for the next part of this topic in our next issue where we will cover how to convert to no-till.

Cornell 08 soybean variety trial results: In the table below is the relative ranking of the top performing soybean varieties entered into the soybean variety trial conducted in central NY. based on tests in Cayuga and Livingston Co over the last few years. Lack of rainfall from flower through seed fill can reduce yields. This year that was far from an issue with recorded rainfall of 13.88 inches from mid June through August at the site. Average yield across all hybrids was 61bu/ac. Excessive wetness supported some white mold which may have reduced yields in some varieties. There are a number of good hybrids to choose from in both grp I and Grp II maturity beans. Most growers in our region should select varieties from mid to late grp I for most of their acreage and some early grp II for limited acreage. Anyone growing soybeans at higher elevations should stick with Grp I varieties.

Cornell Soybean Variety 2008 Trial Results

VARIETY	COMPANY/ BRAND	RELATIVE YIELD (%)	YEARS IN TEST
	<u>Group I Varieties</u>	<u>Group I Varieties</u>	<u>Group I Varieties</u>
HS 199RR	GROWMARK FS	109	5
HS 122aRR	GROWMARK FS	108	2
AG0808	Asgrow	105	1
AG1406	Asgrow	102	1
HS 188RR	GROWMARK FS	101	2
	<u>GROUP II VARIE- TIES</u>	<u>GROUP II VARIE- TIES</u>	<u>GROUP II VARIE- TIES</u>
AG2108	Asgrow	112	1
AG2002	Asgrow	105	2
AG2802	Asgrow	105	3
AG2406	Asgrow	105	1
S24-NJ1	NK	104	2
HS 2766(NRR)	GROWMARK FS	104	1
HS 217RR	GROWMARK FS	103	4
33D27	UAP	103	2
AG2110	Asgrow	103	3
S21-N6	NK	102	3
SSG2205	Seedway	101	4
HS 20R80	GROWMARK FS	107	1

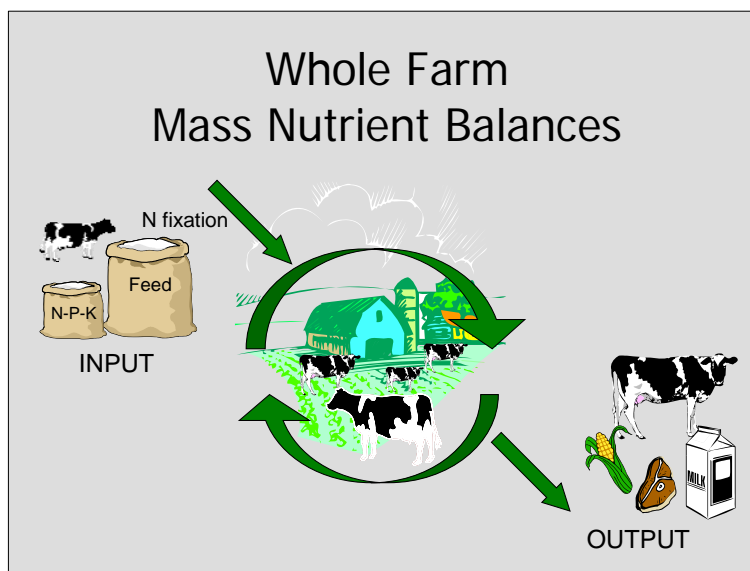
Relative yields of recommended Group I and Group II Roundup Ready soybean varieties for Central/Western New York

Estimating the nutrient status of your farm (source: Joe Lawrence):

Many of the dairy farmers that I have worked with over the years have been good stewards of their land adding manure, fertilizer and lime to their fields. Many farmers might be surprised that they were importing more nutrients on their farm in the form of feed than fertilizer. To get an estimation of the over-all (big-picture) nutrient status of the farm you can do a mass nutrient balance on your farm.

What is a Mass Nutrient Balance?

A mass nutrient balance is the difference between the amount of N, P, and potassium (K) imported through purchased products and the amounts exported off the farm via milk, meat, crops, manure and/or compost. Mass Nutrient Balance assessments are useful for livestock, dairy and crop farms alike; they can help identify management alternatives that can enhance nutrient use efficiency and farm profitability.



What can a Mass Nutrient Balance do?

A Mass Nutrient Balance analysis helps farm managers determine where the greatest nutrient use inefficiencies occur by calculating the amount of nutrients being imported (purchased feeds, fertilizers, animals, etc.), exported (products sold including feed, milk, animal, crops, etc.), and recycled through the production of manure, pasture and crops on the farm.

You will receive a report that shows farm N, P and K imports and exports in tons for the whole farm and in pounds per acre cropland, per pound of product sold, or per animal unit. The report helps to identify areas of concern and opportunities for more efficient nutrient use that, if addressed, could increase profitability and reduce environmental impact.

How do you participate?

Mass nutrient balances are done for a calendar year and can be

completed anytime on your own or with the help of Cornell Cooperative Extension. All data is kept completely confidential. In preparation for filling out a mass balance it is very helpful to keep records of the quantities of crops grown, purchased and sold; feeds purchased and sold; fertilizers purchased; bedding purchased; milk sold and if any manure is exported off of the farm.

See Agronomy Factsheet # 25 (<http://nmsp.css.cornell.edu/publications/factsheets.asp>) for more information on completing a mass nutrient balance.

Where do I start?

Step 1: Obtain the Mass Nutrient Balance Input Data Form.

This form (three pages) can be downloaded from the Mass Nutrient Balance webpage of the Nutrient Management Spear Program: <http://nmsp.css.cornell.edu/projects/massbalance.asp> or obtained from Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Step 2: Fill out the Input Data Form.

- Fill out all sections of the input form.

Forage analyses are helpful to obtain accurate values for crude protein, P and K. Feed composition values can be obtained from farm records, from your feed companies records and nutritionists, or if needed standard, "book values" for common feeds are available.

Step 3: Enter data into the Whole Farm Nutrient Balance Program

The Whole Farm Nutrient Balance Program is downloadable (free of charge) from <http://nmsp.css.cornell.edu/projects/massbalance.asp> if you wish to do this on your own computer or you can contact Jeff Miller at Cooperative Extension or Caroline Rasmussen of the Nutrient Management Spear Program at Cornell University and we can help you to enter the information into the program.

Step 4: Interpreting the Results

- Once the information is submitted to Cornell you will receive a summary of your mass nutrient balance for that year that includes a comparison of your nutrient balance to all other farms in the dataset. You can use this information to compare your farm with other farms with similar characteristics or track changes at your farm over multiple years.

After you have had a chance to review the summary we can then set up a meeting to discuss the results.

If you are interested in doing a Mass Nutrient Balance for your farm contact Jeff Miller at 736-3394 ext 120 or email: jjm14@cornell.edu.

If you have specific questions about the software program contact Caroline Rasmussen (cnr2@cornell.edu or 607-255-2875) or Quirine Ketterings (qmk2@cornell.edu or 607 255-3061).



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